A close-up portrait of a man with short brown hair, glasses, and a goatee. He is resting his chin on his right hand and looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. He is wearing a white shirt and a dark grey vest. The background is dark and out of focus.

*Magnus
Andersson*

*Short
Sounds*

Plucked Strings / Imaginary Bodies

This disc juxtaposes guitar music by several of a remarkably prolific and individual generation of Italian composers. Post-war Italy did not place the guitar at the symbolic centre of its popular culture as did the USA and Britain - an icon of life lived on the move and for the moment. So Italian composers could turn to its concert-hall cousin untroubled by reverberations from the lyrical celebration of growing pains - or indeed from a daunting canon of established 'masterpieces'. The concert-hall guitar was doubly free to define its own persona.

Many reasons have been advanced for the singular outburst of energies that flowed into the work of young Italian composers after the Second World War. Stepping free from adolescences lived out in the tragicomic twilight of fascism no doubt had much to do with it. (Though this was a twilight at least sufficiently equivocal to permit talents to be confusedly nurtured, rather than simply numbed into silence, as happened elsewhere during the forties). Much of the youthful post-war European avant-garde tended to rebound from one conformity to another - that of an a-histo-

rical, post-Webernian 'structuralism'. But young Italians of this generation either showed themselves unpersuaded by efforts to shake off the echoes of the past - **Berio** and **Maderna** prominent amongst them - or instead quietly manoeuvred the aesthetic precepts of the avant-garde to extremities where critical self-scrutiny became unavoidable, as in profoundly different ways did **Clementi** and **Donatoni**.

With the exception of **Aldo Clementi** - intent in his early years upon exploring the terrain between visual and auditory abstraction - one element common to the other composers represented here is an assured instinct for musical 'gesture'. But the imaginary bodies thus conjured up differ greatly. Neither **Bruno Maderna** nor **Luciano Berio** would have wished to address the guitar save through a dialogue with its established image ('Spain', 'flamenco', a corporeally shaped instrument embraced by the whole, hunched body, but galvanizing the movements of other, erect bodies etc.). For **Franco Donatoni**, on the other hand, the incisive attack of plucked strings (a dynamically varied first cousin to his beloved harpsichord) creates an ebullient stringency of gesture that is devoid of louche sensuality or animal warmth. *Algo* (the Spanish word for 'something') was one of the fresh, vivid scattering of pieces from 1977 with which

Donatoni found a path back to a genuine '*allégresse du fabricant*' after the supreme crisis in his career - when he had argued himself into compositional silence, and renounced further creative work.

Louche sensuality was, on the other hand, so avidly central to **Sylvano Bussotti's** creative persona, that where his insistent 'demasking' of the erotic roots of the post-war gestural vocabulary was not abetted by theatre or text, he would - as here - beckon listeners down that interpretive path by soliciting gasps and sighs from his performer. Such schoolboy provocations had the merit of making knowingly explicit the 'trajectory of a useless orgasm' that **Aldo Clementi** in a fine, and darkly ironic introduction to his music, declared himself intent upon expunging from his compositions. The quiet, rotating canons of his mature work, tracing over and over the beloved outlines of phrases from a tonal paradise that our culture cannot bear to acknowledge as irretrievably lost, show - as do **Donatoni's** later works - that creative adventure may flourish beyond negativity and renunciation.

The guitar might have seemed fated to proffer to its admirers exquisite and intimate miniatures. Typically, **Luciano Berio** responded with an act of calculated rebellion: an unabashedly broad and

complex canvas. In its mixture of identifications with, and rebellion against the playing traditions of the guitar, *Sequenza XI* recalls some of interrogative spirit of that other essay in plucked strings, *Sequenza II* for harp, with which **Berio** in 1962 set in motion the principle of a series of extended works for virtuoso soloist. What has changed in the intervening quarter-century is the subtlety with which he interrogates harmonic nuance: not just as felicitous detail, but as a necessary moment within a broad span of musical thought. **Donatoni's** *Algo* may serve as a wiry symbol of the resilience of musical invention: of its phoenix-like capacity to return jubilantly from the edge of annihilation. **Berio's** *Sequenza XI* is an assured demonstration that nothing need be lost or renounced, that the achievements in musical thought of the previous two centuries are there to be possessed and re-integrated, not wistfully scrutinized from behind museum plate-glass. It is also - and typically - a celebration of the sheer physical bravura of the performing musician. The Italian respect for the musical *homo faber*, for human activity rather than mystic contemplation, for construction rather than abetting sentimental reverie, would seem resilient and enduring.

David Osmond-Smith

"Short notes on short sounds"

by Magnus Andersson

Once asked Franco Donatoni in an interview why he wrote so much for the guitar and plucked instruments. "I don't like long sounds" was his blunt answer, but he added that it probably also had to do with the character of the Italian language. Whatever the reason, there is no doubt that the Italians have always shown and still demonstrate a remarkable and unproblematic affinity with the guitar. The works presented on this CD are a testimonial, not only to the variety and richness of this culture, but also to its sense of history in a modern context.

12 *Variazioni* (1980)

Although the title might suggest an attempt at neo-classical guitar writing nothing but the bare outlines of the form remains. A rhythmically plain motive climbs upward from the lowest register of the guitar and then descends backwards down again. This "arch" is interspersed with various arpeggio-like figures in different speeds and colours. The immobility of the "theme" is contrasted with the mobility of the surrounding gestures - everything is different yet the same. **Clementi's** music has a meta-musical dimension in its obsession with the past, subduing the present into a stream of lost possibilities, but it is also very pure music, with severely self-referential compositional techniques.

Algo - due pezzi per chitarra (1977)

Algo comes from the period of transition in Donatoni's career which led him to the music of his final period, full of densely glittering and active surfaces. His decision to work with found material had evolved much earlier though and in *Algo* this "found material" is a short generic "lick" from the jazz-guitarist Django Reinhardt (1910-53). *Algo* consists of two movements - "one always needs two things to make something happen". Both use the same material - an ingeniously structured 12 note series that has clear tonal implications (C, Eb, E, F, Ab, A, Bb, Db, D, F#, G, B). In fact, one may look at the piece as being about the return, or rather the failure to return, to a tonic - in this case the pitch C. The main part of the first piece is a sort of collage of different fragments. A bridge passage in *accelerando* gives way to a final section in which the "lick" is amplified over the whole fretboard of the guitar. A coda states the basic cell of the series (C, Eb, and E) in vibrato, broken with sudden outbursts of the "lick".

In contrast the second piece is more atmospheric and contains a series of clearly delineated episodes of different character. The final episode begins by simply stating the pitch C in octave. However, the "tonic" is unequivocal, surrounded as it is by chaotically sounding and very fast ("il più presto possibile") arpeggios that blur any sense of pitch. Then a soft coda begins in staccato, almost like "morse-signals", using pitches (B, Eb and E) that are "attracted" to the "tonic" C. A final vertical statement of the basic cell (Eb, C, E) ends the piece - an ambiguous return to something (*Algo*). As a piece *Algo* is as a clear expression as anything in Donatoni's output of the poetics hidden beneath his insistence on compositional craft.

Algo is dedicated to Ruggero Chiesa and Oscar Ghiglia.

Fantasia su frammenti di Michelangelo Galilei (1978)

In this *Fantasia* for the lute, Aldo Clementi selected various fragments from the "Il primo libro d'intavolatura di liuto" by Michelangelo Galilei. The fragments, either in minor or major tonality, are extracted from Galilei's fantasias and are presented alternately, minor following major and so on. The lengths of the fragments vary considerably, but the suggested phrasing in rubato and articulation remains constant, transmitting a peculiar feeling of a world in a deadlock. Although Clementi does not use his normal compositional technique of the canon in either the *Fantasia* or in the "12 Variazioni", the randomness of linear aggregates used here offers an interesting alternative.

I play the *Fantasia* on the alto-guitar. This instrument, developed between 1959 and 1970, is an invention of the Swedish maker Georg Bolin (1912-1993) and was designed to enable guitarists to play lute music. It is tuned like the renaissance lute, but it has one bass string more than the 10-choir lute for which Galilei wrote. To have 11 strings proved to be an extra bonus in this work. Galilei raises the tuning of the 8th string a half tone when needed. When selecting his fragments, Clementi did not consider this practicality and inevitably some impractical coincidences occur. However, on the alto guitar such concerns are easily solved as the two bass notes a semitone apart can be given to two adjacent bass strings. I always wondered why Georg Bolin decided on 11 strings. Now I know why.

The Fantasia is dedicated to Ruggero Chiesa

Y Despuès (1971)

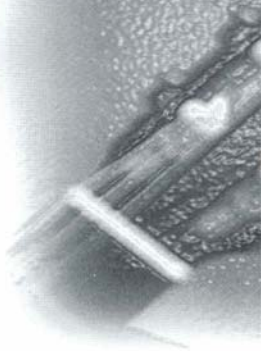
Like many other composers before and after him, **Bruno Maderna** approached the guitar through one of the instrument's great literary executors, the poet Federico Garcia Lorca.

"*Y Despuès*" is a poem from Lorca's collection "The Andalusian Song" (1921). Maderna's music responds to the desolate yet lyrical view of the human situation expressed in this poem. The poem describes how time constructs labyrinths that eventually vanish; this and the poem's recurrent image of the remaining desert suggested to Maderna the use of an open form. After the main part of the piece has reached a violent climax, a coda follows in which each line of the poem becomes a fragment of music. Each fragment is given in two versions that differ only in dynamics and articulation. The ordering and choice of fragments is to be decided by the musician. In this recording I play all fragments in both versions in a circular fashion.

Y Despuès is written for the 10-string guitar and is dedicated to Narciso Yepes who was one of the prime exponents of this guitar. Four strings are added downwards below the normal six strings; e, b, g, D, A, E and then C, Bb, Ab and Gb. Maderna lowered the 7th string from C to B in *Y Despuès*. Why use the 10-string guitar? Apart from fulfilling Narciso Yepes's commission, the instrument adds to the harmonic possibilities available and its sound also distorts some of the guitar's "Spanish" character. For Maderna, coming to the guitar from the outside, yet dealing with a very Spanish subject in "*Y Despuès*", this effect of "verfremdung" may well have been an attractive expressive bonus.

Rara (eco seriológico) (1965)

Of the pieces in this programme, *Rara* by **Sylvano Bussotti** stands out as being less concerned with a structural discourse than with a more improvisational and sensual relationship between musician and the score. *Rara (eco seriológico)* is described in the catalogue as 5 pieces in one for violin, or viola or double bass and also guitar. The evocative graphic score coaxes from the musician a creative strategy that annihilates more usual instrumental concerns.



Sequenza IX (1988)

In the *Sequenza* for guitar two of the instrument's principal traditions (or "histories" as **Berio** says) are juxtaposed, Flamenco and Classical. Through a sophisticated use of both the idiomatic harmony of the guitar and a more extended non-idiomatic harmony, these two traditions merge into one new vision of what the guitar is. A difficult piece to play, in particular to articulate clearly the various rasguado and strumming techniques asked for, which go far beyond what the classical guitarist is normally trained to do.

But, even more difficult than any mechanical questions are the challenging interpretative problems that the *Sequenza IX* poses to the formal control of the musician. One has to balance the static quality of an essentially repetitive form with the innate directional energy of the figurative material which is, as it were, constantly reread as the piece proceeds. This generates a constant flux between the active surface and an undercurrent of melancholy. The mental energy needed to bridge this conflict is to me the true drama of the *Sequenza*.

Sequenza IX was written for the American guitarist **Eliot Fisk**.

Brin (1990)

Brin was originally a piece for piano from 1990. In 1994 it was adapted for guitar, with some assistance from **Luciano Berio**, by Bruce Charles.

As the title indicates ("brin" is French for scrap), it is just a short unassuming miniature, soft and immobile. The static harmony and the melancholic atmosphere of *Brin* lend itself perfectly to the suggestive character of the guitar (to my ears it could even suggest a scrap left over from the *Sequenza* for guitar). In 2001 another version of *Brin* by the American guitarist **Eliot Fisk** was published. Set in a completely different register, high as opposed to low, it gives a very different perspective of the same piece. A fitting tribute then to the music of Luciano Berio, who has so often stressed both the capacity of music for openness and the concept of music's history as an ever ongoing search.

Magnus Andersson
Stockholm, December 2001



Magnus Andersson

guitar /alto guitar⁺ /10-stringed guitar⁺⁺

Donatoni	1-2	Algo	8'23 (3'53 + 4'28)
Clementi	3	Dodici variazioni	7'48
	4	Fantasia ⁺	10'50
Bussotti	5	Rara	4'34
Maderna	6	Y Después ⁺⁺	6'55
Berio	7	Sequenza XI	13'55
	8	Brin	2'22 (version by Bruce Charles 1994)
	9	Brin	2'21 (version by Eliot Fisk 2001)
		total	57'11

The Swedish guitarist Magnus Andersson (1956) has since long been a leading guitarist in contemporary music on the international scene and as such a major force in the development of a new and substantial repertoire for the guitar. Many leading composers of today have written for him. He has performed and given masterclasses all over the world and his concerts has been widely broadcasted. In 1984 he founded the guitar class at "The Summer Courses of New Music in Darmstadt" where he taught up until 1996. Once a student of Angelo Gilardino in Italy (1976-80), he has continued to keep a close contact with that country. Italian composers that have written solo, chamber music and concertos for him include Aldo Clementi, Franco Donatoni, Mauro Bagella, Fabio Cifariello Ciardi, Luca Francesconi, Fabio Vacchi, Stefano Scodanibbio, Claudio Ambrosini and Maurizio Pisati.

Magnus Andersson ~ guitar

Short Sounds

<i>Franco Donatoni (1927-2000)</i>	1-2	Algo	8'23 (3'53 + 4'28)
<i>Aldo Clementi (1925)</i>	3	Dodici variazioni	7'48
	4	Fantasia	10'50
<i>Sylvano Bussotti (1931)</i>	5	Rara	4'34
<i>Bruno Maderna (1920-1973)</i>	6	Y Después	6'55
<i>Luciano Berio (1925)</i>	7	Sequenza XI	13'55
	8	Brin	2'22 (version by Bruce Charles 1994) *
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